

VOLUNTEER TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

- 1. REASON FOR ISSUE:** This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Handbook defines the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) Volunteer Transportation Network (VTN) and its relationship to a VHA facility.
- 2. SUMMARY OF CONTENT:** VTN was established to provide needed transportation for veterans seeking services from a VA facility and/or an authorized facility. VTN guidelines permit volunteer participation in providing transportation to veterans using the volunteer's privately-owned conveyance or a government-owned vehicle, including donated vehicles, county vehicles, DAV Department or Chapter vehicles, public transportation and contracted transportation.
- 3. RELATED ISSUES:** VHA Directive 1620, and VHA Handbook 1620.1.
- 4. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** The Voluntary Service Office (1OC2) is responsible for the contents of this handbook.
- 5. RECISSIONS:** DM&S Circular 10-87-11 is rescinded.
- 6. RECERTIFICATION:** This document is scheduled for recertification on or before the last working day of May 2006.

S/ by Tom Sanders for
Thomas L. Garthwaite, M.D.
Under Secretary for Health

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VOLUNTEER TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

1. PURPOSE

This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Handbook defines the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) Volunteer Transportation Network (VTN) and its relationship to a VHA facility.

2. BACKGROUND

a. Changes in the level of funding for the Beneficiary Travel program led the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to accept alternative options for transportation of eligible veterans seeking VA services. VTN was established to provide needed transportation for veterans seeking services from a VA facility and/or authorized facility. VTN guidelines permit volunteer participation in providing transportation to veterans using a volunteer's privately-owned conveyance or a government-owned vehicle, including donated vehicles, county vehicles, DAV Department (State) or Chapter (local) vehicles, public transportation and contracted transportation.

b. Since 1987, the DAV, with the support of VA Voluntary Service (VAVS), has staffed and funded a nationwide DAV volunteer-based transportation network. In some instances, DAV Departments and/or Chapters have donated vehicles to VA medical facilities. The DAV established and funded the position of Hospital Service Coordinator (HSC) who assumes the responsibility for coordination of the DAV Transportation Network and is a VAVS volunteer. The HSC coordinates with VA staff to ensure the availability and utilization of the full range of community transportation resources to meet the needs of the local facility.

3. AUTHORITY

VA authorizes volunteer participation in providing transportation to veterans seeking VA services. VTN provides transportation to VA medical facilities and offices for veterans and caregivers, when medically indicated, who have no other means of transportation.

4. ACTION

a. VA medical center staff are encouraged to establish VTNs and/or cooperate with DAV representatives and other organizations to provide assistance, within available resources, in the development, implementation, and operation of a VTN that will meet the needs of their facility.

b. An HSC or Volunteer Coordinator must be in place and registered as a VAVS volunteer before the VTN can become operational. Space accommodations for the position may be made in accordance with current VA directives.

c. The VA medical facility Director assigns program responsibility to Voluntary Service, which uses the following instructions as guidance for implementing the program.

(1) Facilities and/or Veterans Integrated Services Networks (VISNs) without an existing VTN are strongly encouraged to establish a task group to determine the transportation needs of eligible beneficiaries, research existing transportation services, and analyze potential support from voluntary organizations and individuals. The task group needs to be composed of representatives from Health Administration Service (HAS) or an equivalent program office, Social Work Service, Voluntary Service, DAV, and other services and/or service organizations, as deemed appropriate.

(2) Appropriate HAS and Voluntary Service personnel are to collaborate with the DAV HSC in establishing local procedures to schedule transportation to meet the needs of the veteran patient (see App. A). **NOTE:** *The HSC assumes coordination of the VTN.*

(3) Linkage needs to be established between the DAV HSC and the VA medical center Community Service Coordinator to ensure the availability and utilization of the full range of community transportation resources.

(4) Using Appendix B as a model, each facility and/or VISN must develop a station policy memorandum governing the acceptance and use of transportation volunteers.

(5) Establish a training program for volunteers who accept assignments as volunteer drivers and other assignments deemed necessary. Training programs need to be held in locations most convenient to the volunteers being trained (see App. C).

(6) A facility and/or VISN with a VTN is required to administer physical examinations and health screenings for volunteer drivers that parallel the physical examinations and health screenings required for wage-grade van drivers, on a regular basis, at the local facility and/or VISN.

(7) Guidance for volunteers transporting veterans in privately-owned vehicles is found in Appendix E.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

a. **Chief of Voluntary Service or Program Manager.** The responsibilities of the Chief of Voluntary Service, or Program Manager, include, but are not limited to:

(1) Assisting in recruiting transportation volunteers, who meet the following criteria:

(a) Providing proof of a safe driving record, a valid driver's license, current automobile insurance, and private insurance. This documentation is kept in the volunteer's personnel file in the Voluntary Service Office. The volunteer must inform the HSC, or volunteer coordinator, of any moving violations, traffic accidents, expiration of automobile insurance, and any other pertinent information throughout the volunteer's term of service.

(b) Completing and signing the waiver of compensation on the VA Form 10-7055, Application for

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Voluntary Service, or facsimile.

- (c) Completing a volunteer orientation with the Chief of Voluntary Service, or designee.
- (d) Receiving all training required by the Voluntary Service, Engineering Service, Police and Security Service, Health Administration Service, Fiscal Service, Social Work Service, and other services, as deemed appropriate.
- (e) Providing a vehicle in good working condition (with proper vehicle registration and up-to-date state inspection, wherever applicable) when using personal vehicle to transport VA patients.
- (2) Interviewing, orienting, and scheduling the necessary job-specific training for volunteer drivers.
- (3) Ensuring necessary documentation is secured prior to assigning duties to volunteer drivers.
- (4) Maintaining volunteer files and establishing a mechanism by which each volunteer's credentials, training, and health records can be updated regularly.
- (5) Maintaining a record of volunteers' hours.
- (6) Bestowing appropriate recognition on volunteers for the hours of service contributed.
- (7) Reporting significant events to the VAVS Office (10C2); i.e., major accidents and incidents, and transportation network concerns and issues which have not been resolved at the local level.
- (8) Ensuring that a Volunteer Position Description is on file and is communicated to the volunteer.
- b. **The HSC or Volunteer Coordinator.** The HSC or Volunteer Coordinator is responsible for:
 - (1) Setting up a DAV Office of Transportation at the VA medical facility where assigned and making sure that it is adequately staffed.
 - (2) Coordinating volunteers assigned to the VTN.
 - (3) Keeping adequate records of the VTN. This includes keeping a record of the:
 - (a) Names of volunteers;
 - (b) Individual volunteer hours;
 - (c) Mileage traveled;
 - (d) Date, time, place, and names of veterans transported; and

- (e) Incidents and/or accidents.
- (4) Coordinating the VTN activities with the Chief of Voluntary Service to ensure VA recognition of all volunteers involved as transportation network VAVS volunteers and their hours as official VAVS hours.
- (5) Ensuring that all transportation provided by volunteers has been approved by the designated VA employee as an official VAVS activity.
- (6) Keeping the DAV and the DAV Auxiliary VA medical facility VAVS representative informed of the DAV Transportation Network activities.
- (7) Recruiting transportation volunteers who meet the criteria outlined in subparagraph 5a(1)(a) through 5a(1)(e).
- (8) Publicizing the VTN and the need for more volunteers.
- (9) Working with the DAV National Service Office (NSO) and/or the DAV Department supervisor to establish a budget for the VTN (for the HSC, if applicable).
- (10) Reporting office activities to the DAV Department and DAV National Headquarters on a monthly basis or more often, if warranted, i.e., major accidents and/or incidents, and transportation network concerns and issues that have not been resolved at the local level.

c. **Transportation Volunteer Driver.** The Transportation Volunteer Driver is responsible for:

- (1) Providing Voluntary Service and DAV with proof of a safe driving record, a valid driver's license and current automobile or private insurance, and informing HSC of any changes related to current automobile or private insurance and safe driving record.
- (2) Receiving required training and required employee physicals and health screenings that parallel the standards of wage-grade van drivers at the local facility.
- (3) Carrying out the assignment as outlined by the Volunteer Position Description.
- (4) Reporting to the HSC (volunteer coordinators) the following:
 - (a) Name(s) and number of patients transported;
 - (b) Miles driven;
 - (c) Volunteer hours; and
 - (d) Any significant events, i.e., traffic accidents and problems encountered while on duty.

**DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS (DAV)
HOSPITAL SERVICE COORDINATOR (HSC)**

The Disabled American Veterans (DAV) Hospital Service Coordinator (HSC) is stationed at a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facility and is a full-time employee of the DAV Department. This individual's activities are coordinated with the DAV National Service Office (NSO) and/or the DAV Department Supervisor who is responsible for coordinating the DAV State Older Veterans Assistance Program (OVAP) activities, the State DAV Transportation Network, and providing volunteers to service the VA medical facility.

1. TRANSPORTATION

The Volunteer Transportation Network (VTN) is designed to provide transportation services to veterans seeking benefits at VA facilities, including Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) offices, and who have no other means of transportation. Volunteer transportation services consist of, but are not limited to, the following:

- a. Private vehicles;
- b. DAV Department or Chapter vehicles;
- c. Public transportation;
- d. Contracted transportation; and
- e. Government-owned vehicles, including donated vehicles and county vehicles.

2. FUNDING OF DAV HSC AND DAV TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

Departments not having the resources to fund the full time position of a HSC or the DAV Transportation Network may apply for financial assistance by submitting a grant application to National DAV Headquarters. Application for this process is as follows:

- a. The DAV HSC must be recommended and approved by the DAV Department and DAV National Service Office Supervisor. The DAV HSC must register as a VAVS volunteer by completing VA Form 10-7055, Application for Voluntary Service, which will be kept on file. **NOTE:** *The HSC is not to be entered into the VAVS database, nor will the HSC receive credit hours for services rendered as a DAV HSC paid employee.*
- b. DAV Departments are encouraged to place the HSC under the direct supervision of the DAV NSO Supervisor with jurisdiction over the VA medical facility.
- c. A detailed description of the proposed DAV Transportation Network and proposed budget must

be prepared. This description needs to outline how transportation needs of veterans will be met (i.e., list chapters or other agencies that are providing transportation service, what are the central points of departure and returns, etc.). An example of how the DAV Transportation Network functions follows: Veteran Jones calls the DAV HSC and asks for transportation to the VA medical facility. The HSC contacts a DAV transportation volunteer in the veteran's community and arranges for roundtrip transportation to a VA medical center, or scheduled pickup point.

d. The DAV Transportation Network may include funding for providing public transportation (e.g., bus tickets) for veterans residing in areas where volunteers are not able to provide transportation or where it is not practical to do so. This program may include reimbursement to volunteers for incidental expenses they incur (i.e., food, gas, etc.).

3. POSSIBLE SOURCES OF APPLICANTS FOR HSC

For those Departments without Department Service Officer (DSO) employees, there are many sources for the position of HSC. The following lists some of those sources:

- a. Existing volunteers looking for supplementary income;
- b. Retired disabled veterans looking for supplementary income;
- c. Veterans pursuing education under vocational rehabilitation training (Chapter 31);
- d. Retired National Service Officers; and
- e. Job Service Centers (the local veterans employment representative (LVER) or the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP)). **NOTE:** *Consideration should only be given to those applicants eligible for membership in the DAV or the Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary (DAVA).*

**SAMPLE FOR FACILITY MEMORANDUM ON
TRANSPORTATION VOLUNTEER DRIVERS**

Date:

TO:

SUBJ: Transportation Volunteer Drivers

1. Transportation Volunteer Drivers are regularly scheduled volunteers whose assignment is specifically stated as providing transportation to veterans in the community. Transportation Volunteer Drivers may utilize their own vehicles in the process of escorting veterans to and from Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) facilities and provide this service without compensation from VA, the veteran patient and/or a service organization (with the possible exception of out-of-pocket expenses).

2. Transportation Volunteer Drivers must meet the following criteria:

a. Provide proof of safe driving record, a valid driver's license and current motor vehicle bodily-injury liability and property damage, or personal insurance. This documentation must be kept in the volunteer's personnel file in the Voluntary Service Office. The volunteer must inform the Hospital Service Coordinator (HSC) of any moving violations, traffic accidents, expiration of automobile insurance, and/or any other pertinent information throughout the volunteer's term of service.

b. Sign the waiver of compensation on the VA Form 10-7055, Application for Voluntary Service.

c. Receive required employee physicals and health screenings that parallel the standards of wage-grade van drivers at the local facility.

d. Complete a volunteer orientation with the Chief of Voluntary Service, or designee.

e. Receive all training required by the Voluntary Service, Engineering Service, Police and Security Service, Health Administration Service or an equivalent office, Fiscal Service, Social Work Service, and other services, as deemed appropriate.

f. Provide a vehicle in good working condition (with proper vehicle registration and up-to-date state inspection, wherever applicable) when using a personal vehicle to transport VA patients.

3. Specific assignments may be made to volunteer drivers by the DAV HSC, or designee, or the Chief of Voluntary Service. VA staff may contact the DAV HSC Office when transportation is required. Every attempt will be made by the DAV HSC staff to make the necessary arrangements as soon as possible. At times, Transportation Volunteer Drivers may not be available and service to the veteran will be delayed. In such instances, community-based veterans who require transportation assistance may personally contact local DAV chapters for assistance in making suitable arrangements. Appropriate personnel must submit the names of the veterans to the Beneficiary Travel Clerk upon arrival on station. Veterans utilizing the Volunteer Transportation Network will not be eligible for travel

funds.

4. Transportation Volunteer Drivers are considered “without compensation employees” within the purview of the Federal Tort Claims Act (FTCA). Therefore, while they are acting in the scope of their employment, they are afforded the protection of FTCA. This coverage extends only to the period in which they are performing the assignment. For example, a volunteer driver who makes a side trip to the bank or laundry while the veteran is in the vehicle is not covered. For this reason, it is required that all Transportation Volunteer Drivers carry adequate motor vehicle bodily-injury liability and property damage, or personal insurance. It is also required that Transportation Volunteer Drivers refrain from making side trips while in the performance of their assignment and that they take the most direct route to and from the VA medical facility.

5. Transportation Volunteer Drivers must record their hours on the assignment sheet. They may record the time from the beginning of the assignment until completion of the assignment.

6. **Reference:** VHA Handbook 1620.2, Appendix E, Volunteers Transporting Patients in Cars Owned by Volunteers.

7. **Rescission:** None.

8. **Follow-up Responsibility:** Chief, Voluntary Service (135).

9. **Rescission Date:**

Medical Center Director

Distribution

TRAINING OUTLINE FOR VOLUNTEER DRIVERS

1. Purpose of the Volunteer Transportation Network

- a. Disabled American Veterans (DAV) leadership role,
- b. Eligibility of veterans needing transportation, and
- c. Unique needs of local facility.

2. Volunteer Involvement and Benefits

- a. Driver qualifications,
- b. Personal insurance needs,
- c. Protection by Federal Tort Claim Act,
- d. Health benefits,
- e. Volunteer meal coverage,
- f. Credit for volunteer hours (awards),
- g. Identification,
- h. Local parking regulations and locations, and
- i. Job-specific training.

3. Assignment Description for the Volunteer Transportation Driver. The Volunteer Transportation Driver must:

- a. Meet appropriate personnel qualifications and physical requirements (the volunteer must meet both).
- b. Know the hours required by assignment.
- c. Know the volunteer's responsibilities, including the need to contact local authorities in case of emergency.
- d. Understand the need for using the direct route when on assignment.

e. Understand the recording of information (see App. D).

f. Undertake the supervision of assignments.

g. Understand the reasons for terminating the assignment and/or the volunteer. They are:

(1) Driving record (Reference, Title 5 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 930.113, Motor Vehicle Operators),

(2) Lack of liability insurance,

(3) Health (Reference, 5 CFR 339.201, Physical and Medical Qualifications),

(4) Complaints (Reference, 5 CFR 930.113, Motor Vehicle Operators),

(5) Inappropriate use of vehicle, and

(6) Inappropriate conduct or behavior.

4. Specific Responsibilities of Volunteer Drivers

a. Valid automobile or personal insurance (certificate, where applicable).

b. Telephone availability.

c. A definite time availability.

d. Completed volunteer orientation, plus the training for this specific program.

e. To maintain accurate and complete trip reports.

f. To provide a vehicle in good working condition (with proper vehicle registration and up-to-date state inspection, wherever applicable) when using personal vehicle to transport VA patients.

5. Additional Training Needs

a. Familiarity with area assigned for pick-up of patients.

b. Knowledge of how to communicate and/or deal with disabled veterans and their families.

c. Appropriate use of vehicles to:

- (1) Scheduled appointments,
- (2) Non-scheduled appointments, and
- (3) Patient activities.
- d. Training for wheelchair transport and other devices (e.g., oxygen), if applicable.
- e. Training for emergency procedures.

6. The Responsibilities of the HSC or Volunteer Coordinator are to:

- a. Coordinate the program with appropriate services.
- b. Provide all volunteer drivers with the HSC's name, office location, and telephone number.
- c. Receive the transportation request and determine the transportation eligibility of patient.
- d. Supervise all the volunteer transportation drivers.
- e. Contact the volunteer transportation driver and make the assignment.
- f. Provide funds for transportation, as needed, to indigent and/or needy patients.
- g. Assist the VA medical center and the DAV in providing publicity for this program.
- h. Prepare and distribute all reports to Department and National DAV Headquarters.
- i. Report all incidents and accidents to the designated VA or DAV staff, as appropriate.

SAMPLE OF A TRANSPORTATION VOLUNTEER CONTACT SHEET

1. DATE OF CONTACT: _____
2. NAME OF VETERAN: _____
3. ADDRESS OF VETERAN: _____

4. SPECIAL DIRECTIONS: _____

5. TELEPHONE NUMBER OF VETERAN: _____
6. PICK UP TIME: _____
7. DATE OF APPOINTMENT: _____
8. PLACE OF APPOINTMENT: _____
9. FOR FUTHER INFORMATION CALL: _____
10. EMERGENCY NUMBER: _____
11. VOLUNTEER ASSIGNED: _____
12. TELEPHONE NUMBER OF VOLUNTEER: _____
13. DATE OF CONTACT: _____
14. ASSIGNMENT COMPLETED: DATE: _____ TIME: _____
15. SPEEDOMETER READING OUT: _____
16. SPEEDOMETER READING IN: _____
17. TOTAL MILES: _____ TOTAL HOURS: _____
18. COMPLETED BY: _____
19. RECEIVED BY HSC OR OTHER SUPERVISOR: _____

VOLUNTEERS TRANSPORTING PATIENTS IN CARS OWNED BY VOLUNTEERS

1. The potential for liability on the part of the Government arising from permitting volunteers to use their privately-owned vehicles to transport Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) patients depends upon whether or not the volunteer is deemed to be an employee of the Government and acting within the scope of volunteer's employment. Where these requirements are satisfied, the Government will be liable under the Federal Tort Claim Act (FTCA), Title 28 United States Code (U.S.C.) Subsection 2671-2680, for damage to or loss of property, personal injury, or wrongful death caused by the negligent or wrongful act or omission of the employee. FTCA defines "employees of the government" to include persons acting on behalf of a Federal agency in an official capacity, temporarily in the service of the United States, whether with or without compensation. Volunteer workers serving on a "without compensation" basis should, therefore, be regarded as employees of the Government within the purview of the FTCA.

2. Moreover, by virtue of 28 U.S.C., Section 2679(b)-(e), the remedy against the Government under the FTCA is exclusive of any other action or proceeding by reason of the same subject matter against the employee-driver whose act or omission gives rise to a claim. When such an employee is sued individually, whether in Federal or State court, the Attorney General, after determination that the employee was acting within the scope of employment, certifies such status to the Federal court which thereafter dismisses the individual from the suit, substituting the United States as the sole Federal defendant. If the suit is initially filed in State court, this dismissal or substitution process occurs after the action is removed by the Attorney General to the Federal Court. Employees who operate Government motor vehicles or privately-owned vehicles on Government business should consider carrying private liability insurance to cover the situation in which the employee may not be afforded the protection of the Act. In other words, an employee would not be covered under the Act if the employee has an accident while driving a vehicle not in the scope of employment, such as when deviating from a generally traveled route in order to pick up personal laundry or to perform other personal errands. Additionally, as a rule, it is held that an employee is not within the scope of employment while driving between the employee's home and place of duty. In conformity with the provisions of the Act, the final decision as to immunity rests with the Attorney General of the United States and, ultimately, the Federal Court; therefore, personal liability insurance might be a prudent investment to insure adequate protection to the individual employee.

3. Regarding injuries to employees in the course of their duties, the provisions of the Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA), 5 U.S.C. Section 8101, et seq., are applicable to VA volunteers. The Act provides for compensation and medical services for the disability or death of an employee resulting from personal injury sustained incident to the employee's service. The determination that the injury or death was "incident to service" would be made by the Department of Labor or, ultimately, by the courts.

4. Finally, the Military Personnel and Civilian Employees Claims Act of 1964, as amended, authorizes

the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, or designee, to settle and pay claims for not more than \$40,000 made by an employee for damage to or loss of property incident to the employee's service. Volunteers are eligible claimants under the statute (see VA Manual M-02-1, subpar. 17.03a(2)). However, no claim will be paid if the loss or damage was caused by the employee's own negligence. If the employee has a right to recovery for the loss or damage from a carrier or insurer, a claim for such recovery must be filed before the claim against the United States will be considered. The procedure set forth in VA regulations must be followed (see Title 38 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Subsection 14.664-669). The circumstances are very narrow under which damage to, or loss of, a privately-owned motor vehicle may be held to be incident to service and thus compensable. The motor vehicle must have been required to be used for official Government business, not including travel between quarters and place of duty, parking or vehicles incident to such travel, or use of the vehicle for the convenience of the owner.